



*Senate Republicans have started to assert that changes to Medicare in health insurance reform are damaging to seniors. Republicans don't have a very convincing track record of supporting America's seniors. They voted against Medicare at its inception, tried to privatize Medicare AND Social Security, and have spent the past forty years voting against seniors' interests. As the AARP has noted, Republicans most recent lies on Medicare and Seniors that's simply not true - health insurance reform curbs Medicare waste, fraud and abuse and refocuses Medicare on seniors' health, not insurance companies' wealth.*

#### REPUBLICANS' REAL RECORD ON SENIORS ISSUES: WRONG THEN, WRONG NOW

**Republicans Opposed Medicare From the Beginning.** From the beginning – and consistently since that time - Republicans have gotten it wrong on seniors. When the Medicare legislation passed in July 1965, the majority of Republicans Senators DID NOT voted against Senate passage of Medicare and the final conference report. [Congressional Record, 7/9/1965; Social Security Administration, accessed [9/16/09](#)]

**1965: GOP Said Medicare Was “Brazen Socialism.”** During the 1965 Medicare debate, Republican Senator Carl Curtis of Nebraska voiced the GOP opposition to the program and said of Medicare, “(I)t is not needed. It is socialism. It moves the country in a direction which is not good for anyone, whether they be young or old. It charts a course from which there will be no turning back....It is not only socialism – it is brazen socialism.” [Congressional Record, 7/8/1965]

- ✓ **GOP Insisted Medicare Would Not Rely on Doctors to “Make the Program Work.”** Senator Curtis also warned that Medicare would result in the program “not relying on the advice of the medical association or doctors collectively to make the program work,” insisting that “the insurance industry has a remarkable record” and that Medicare “is not public welfare. It is not charity. It is not kindness. It is socialism. Socialism is not the answer to anything.” [Congressional Record, 7/8/1965]
- ✓ **GOP Predicted Patients Will Suffer Under Medicare.** On the House floor, Representative Hall (R-MO) said, “...we cannot stand idly by now, as the Nation is urged to embark on an ill-conceived adventure in government medicine, the end of which no one can see, and from which the patient is certain to be the ultimate sufferer.” [Congressional Record, 4/8/1965]

**Future GOP Presidential Candidate Dole Was Proud of His Vote Against Medicare.** In 1995, after Medicare had successfully lifted millions of seniors out of poverty and assured them access to affordable health care, then-Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole continued his party's opposition to Medicare. In a 1995 speech to the American Conservative Union while campaigning for the Republican Party's presidential nomination, Dole boasted, “I was there, fighting the fight, voting against Medicare . . . because we knew it wouldn't work in 1965.” [Washington Post, [10/26/1995](#)]

- ✓ **GOP Wanted Medicare to “Whither on the Vine.”** Then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, in remarks to a Blue Cross/Blue Shield conference on October 24, 1995, said of Medicare, “Now, we don't get rid of it in round one because we don't think that that's politically smart, and we don't think that's the right way to go through a transition. But we believe it's going

to wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it -- voluntarily.”  
[New York Times, [7/20/96](#)]

- ✓ **GOP Wanted to “Wean” Seniors From Medicare.** In a 1995 meeting with reporters, then-House Majority Leader Dick Armey said, “We need to wean our old people away from Medicare.” [Newsday, [12/09/06](#)]

## REPUBLICANS’ HAVE CONTINUED TO TRY TO PUT THEIR BAD IDEAS INTO ACTION

**Republicans Have Tried to Undermine Medicare Since 1965.** The Wall Street Journal reported on Republicans long and rocky relationship with Medicare, noting Ronald Reagan’s attempts to cut Medicare early in his presidency and in “the mid-1990s, congressional Republicans proposed deep cuts in Medicare and Medicaid to pay for tax cuts.” [Wall Street Journal, [8/25/09](#)]

**Republicans Have Voted Against Protecting, Strengthening Medicare Nearly 60 Times in the Past Ten Years.** In the past decade, Congress has taken serious steps to improve and strengthen Medicare for America’s seniors and Senate Republicans have stood in the way. In the past decade alone, Senate Republicans refused to support protecting, strengthening and enhancing Medicare for America’s seniors, voting against measures that achieved those goals at least fifty-nine times. [Senate Roll Call [Votes](#), Congressional Record, 2008: S.V. 169, S.V. 160, S.V. 149; 2007: S.V. 132; 2006: S.V. 71, S.V. 50, S.V. 49, S.V. 5; 2005: S.V. 342, S.V. 302, S.V. 297, S.V. 294, S.V. 287, S.V. 60; 2003: S.V. 259, S.V. 258, S.V. 257, S.V. 254, S.V. 253, S.V. 251, S.V. 250, S.V. 249, S.V. 246, S.V. 245, S.V. 244, S.V. 242, S.V. 241, S.V. 240, S.V. 239, S.V. 236, S.V. 234, S.V. 233, S.V. 232, S.V. 230, S.V. 229, S.V. 227, S.V. 173, S.V. 82, S.V. 63, S.V. 21; 2002: S.V. 199, S.V. 186; 2001: S.V. 137, S.V. 122, S.V. 117, S.V. 66; 2000: S.V. 206, S.V. 195, S.V. 186, S.V. 162, S.V. 144, S.V. 65, S.V. 53; 1999: S.V. 229, S.V. 79, S.V. 76, S.V. 66, S.V. 59]

- ✓ **All Senators Voting Against Overriding Bush’s Veto of the Medicare Improvement Act Were Republicans.** Just last year, the Senate passed an override of former President Bush’s veto of the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. All the senators voting to support Bush and his veto of the bill were Republican. [S.V. 177, [7/15/08](#)]
- ✓ **Republican Senators Didn’t Even Want to Move to the Bill.** All senators voting against cloture on the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 were Republicans. They voted against cloture three times. All senators voting against cloture on the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 were Republicans, with the exception of the Leader for procedural reasons. [S.V. 169, [7/9/08](#); S.V. 160, [6/26/08](#) and S.V. 149, [6/12/08](#) – Leader voted against cloture as required by the Senate rules]
- ✓ **Only Republican Senators Voted Against Covering Medicare Beneficiaries’ Outpatient Prescription Drugs.** [S.V. 186, [7/23/02](#)]
- ✓ **Only Republican Senators Voted Against Strengthening Social Security and Medicare.** [S.V. 162, [6/29/00](#)]
- ✓ **Only Republicans Believed That Tax Cuts Were More Important Than Seniors.** [S.V. 66, [3/25/99](#)]

**Republicans Wanted to Privatize Medicare AND Social Security.** Republicans have consistently wanted to move seniors into the private markets. Just this spring, House Republicans offered a budget that “would eventually end the Medicare programs as it is presently known.” If we had listened to Republicans, American seniors would have seen their lifetime savings nearly disappear. As the Wall Street Journal notes: “The wealth of American families plunged nearly 18% in 2008, erasing years of

sharp gains on housing and stocks and marking the biggest loss since the Federal Reserve began keeping track after World War II. The Fed said Thursday that U.S. households' net worth tumbled by \$11 trillion – a decline in a single year that equals the combined annual output of Germany, Japan and the U.K. The data signal the end of an epoch defined by first and second homes, rising retirement funds and ever-fatter portfolios.” [AP, [4/1/2009](#); Wall Street Journal, [3/13/09](#)]

## **SENIORS RECOGNIZE MEDICARE IMPROVES THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING, KNOW REPUBLICANS DON'T ACT IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS**

**Medicare Has Improved Seniors' Health, Helped Seniors Get the Health Care They Need.** In 1965, only about one half of the nation's seniors had health insurance, and most coverage was only for inpatient hospital costs. Today, virtually all seniors have health insurance through Medicare which covers far more than just hospital costs. [Congressional Research Services, [3/10/09](#); Kaiser Family Foundation, [1/09](#)]

- ✓ In 1960, life expectancy for American 65-year-olds was 14.3 years; in 1998, life expectancy at age 65 had rise to 17.8 years. [Health Affairs, [3/01](#)]
- ✓ In 1966, 28.5 percent of Americans aged 65 and older lived in poverty; last year, 9.7 percent of elderly Americans lived in poverty. [U.S. Census Bureau, Table 3, [9/10/09](#)]

**Seniors Like Their Medicare Coverage.** Medicare beneficiaries are highly satisfied with the health coverage. In a recent survey, 91 percent of elderly Medicare beneficiaries rated their health insurance as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good,” compared with just 58 percent of those who purchase health insurance in the individual market. Just 8 percent of Medicare beneficiaries rated their insurance as “fair” or “poor,” compared with 35 percent of those who purchased insurance in the individual market, and 18 percent of those with employer-sponsored insurance. [Health Affairs, [2009](#)]

**Despite Medicare's Success, Republicans Still Don't Think Seniors Should Have Medicare Coverage.** In July, Representative Roy Blunt (R-MO) said in a radio interview, “You could certainly argue that government should have never gotten into the health care business.” The following month, Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele said, “The reality of it is that, you know, this single payer program known as Medicare is a very good example of what we should not have happen with all of our health care.” [The Eagle 93.9, accessed [9/20/2009](#); Newsweek, [8/25/2009](#)]

**Alliance of Retired Americans Lifetime Scores on Supporting Seniors Issues – Republicans Far Below Democrats.** The Alliance of Retired Americans gives Republican senators abysmal lifetime scores on their support of issues that seniors care about. The lowest score a Republican received was 1 percent. The highest lifetime score a Republican senator received was 53 percent - that's a shameful 20 percent BELOW the lowest Democratic senator score of 73 percent. Twelve members of the Democratic caucus received a lifetime score of 100 percent. [Alliance of Retired Americans, Congressional Voting Record, [5/4/09](#)]

**AARP Finds Republican Statements About Medicare Misleading.** In response to recent mischaracterizations of the affect of health reform on Medicare by Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Executive Vice President John Rother issued a statement saying, “Nothing in the bills that have been proposed would bring about the scenarios the RNC is concerned about.” Mr. Rother went out to say, “As we have analyzed the various bills, the proposed Medicare savings do not limit benefits, they do not impose rationing and they do not put the government between patients and their doctors.” [AARP, [8/24/2009](#); Wall Street Journal, [8/25/2009](#)]